

PARSHA WITH

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תשפ"ה RAV BRAZIL PARSHAS AIKEV

## UPGRADING BABY STEPS TO GIANT ONES

The *Parsha* begins with the words **והיה עקב תשמעון**. The word **עקב** literally means heel. The *meforshim* are bothered by the insert and usage of the word **עקב** in this context. Rashi interprets it to refer to *mitzvos* which one tramples upon because they appear insignificant in one's eyes.

Rabbeinu Bachya interprets the word of **עקב** to mean steps taken in order to fulfill *mitzvos*. The *passuk* is revealing here that even the steps one takes is rewarded besides the reward one merits for the fulfillment of the mitzvah itself. For instance to walk to shul and to Beis Medrash, to visit the sick, walking to comfort mourners, to accompany a deceased person to his last resting place. One is even permitted to run to shul on Shabbos. The same applies when one walks to do *aveiros* he is also punished for every step that he took besides the *aveira* itself.

שבא להזהיר על אותן מצות שהוא חייב לפסוע בהן והן פסיעות של מצוה, כגון ללכת אל בית הכנסת ולבית המדרש ולבקר את החולים וללוות את המתים ולנחם אבלים, כל אלו מצות של פסיעות ושכרן גדול, וכבר אמרו רז"ל שאפילו בשבת מותר לו לרוץ לבית הכנסת שנאמר (הושע יא) אחרי ה' ילכו כאריה ישאג, ואם אינו מקיים מצות של פסיעות אותו עון יסובהו ליום הדין, זהו עון עקבי יסובני. וכן אם פוסע לדבר עברה אותו עון יסובהו ליום הדין כמו כן, שכן מצינו בבתו של ר' חנינא בן תרדיון שנגזר עליה לישב בקובה של זונות בעון שדקדקה בפסיעותיה לפני גדולי רומי, והצדיקה עליה את הדין ואמרה (ירמיה לב) גדול העצה ורב העליליה אשר עיניך פקוחות על כל דרכי בני אדם, כלומר אפילו בדקדוק פסיעות. הא למדת שהאדם נוטל שכר על פסיעותיו כפי הדרך שהוא הולך בה, זהו והיה עקב תשמעון:

לך לך This foundation of reward for steps finds its source with Avraham Avinu in his first test of Ten. Hashem tells Avraham go to the land which I will show you. Hashem did not reveal to him that it was *Eretz Yisrael*. Avraham's GPS was Hashem all the way without knowing his destination ahead of time. This was in order to give him reward for every step he took without knowing where he was to land up (Bereishis Rabba 39 9).

We can also explain the extra word of **עקב** in the *passuk* that it is referring to the period of **עקבתא** the heel of *Moshiach's* coming. During this time the *Hester Panim* will be very great. Even so, the little that we do can equal the greatness of the previous generations because of this *Hester Panim*. I once saw in the *sefer* that if one learns the *Pnei Yehoshua* today he can be greater than the *Pnei Yehoshua* who authored the *sefer*. In his generation there weren't the distractions of what we have today a constant tsunami to pollute our hearts and minds

This is what the *passuk* means והיה which Chazal explain to mean a *lashon* of *simcha*. That Hashem (the letters of הויה) will rejoice in the days of *Moshiach* when we will listen to observe His Torah. according to the hurdles that one must overcome in order to fulfill *mitzvos* is the measurement of his reward.

This same concept is hinted in the *passuk* Tehillim 19,12 **בשמרם עקב רב** that if one keeps Hashem's *mitzvos* during the period of *עקבתא דמשיחא* with all its difficult challenges and glittering seductions,

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he will merit רב to more reward than the previous generations who fulfilled them without such difficulties.

The Chofetz Chaim ztl wrote a *mashal* to compare *tefilla* of today in contrast to the *tefillah* of past generations. When a farmer would bring his grain to sell to the market in days of prosperity, the buyer would weigh the produce and then subtract a certain percentage from the total which consisted also of dirt stones and other foreign particles. Not so during the time of famine. Grain was weighed at the price that included all the non grain produce as well because the buyer was lucky to have grain at all. So too, said the Chofetz Chaim, that in the previous generations only pure *tefillas* without foreign thoughts were accepted because then the air was not impure from *tumah*. Today that the challenges to have pure thoughts and intentions in *tefillah* is rampant and *tefillah* in general is lax in many ways, Hashem accepts the sincere *tefillah* even with its impurities no matter how unwholesome it is.

This *mashal* of the Chofetz Chaim is alluded to in the *passuk* we brought above בשמרם עקב רב in which the acronym is רעב and בער. Don't be foolish and thereby lack motivation to *daven* thinking that my quality of *tefilla* is insignificant and worthless. Instead realize תשפה where the א רעב of ruchniyus is scant and the fall out is great, even your *tefillah* can be even greater than *ten* or more generation previous to you.

This idea is hinted in the three steps we take **backwards** before we begin the *Shemoneh Esrai*. It is to awaken within us that the *tefilla* that we are about to *daven* could be way greater and cherished than generations in the past. With this thought take three steps forward and *daven* with all your might even though it will not be full and complete as the previous generations.

Now we can revisit Rabbeinu Bachya's interpretation of the word עקב which comes to convey the reward for steps and blend it together with the interpretation of עקב to mean עקבתא דמשיחא. There are giant steps and baby steps. In the generation of עקב we can take only small baby steps. Nevertheless, these baby steps are deemed by Hashem as the steps of giants because of its challenges.

Fifty five years ago Neil Armstrong stepped on surface of the moon and said his famous quote "One small step for man one giant leap for mankind". A small step is to be deemed a giant leap. Why? Let us look at another quote of his during the same trip as he described the lunar surface as "magnificent desolation. Man's place in this world does not belong in one of desolation and void of life. To be and thrive in such a world is nothing less than a miracle. So too for a person to act like אדם אלקים in a world of a humanity that possesses spiritual desolation is also nothing less than a miracle. Every step of *aliyah* that a Yid takes no matter how tiny its movement, has the today value of a giant step and is cherished and embraced by Hashem forever.

Gut Shabbos Rav Brazil